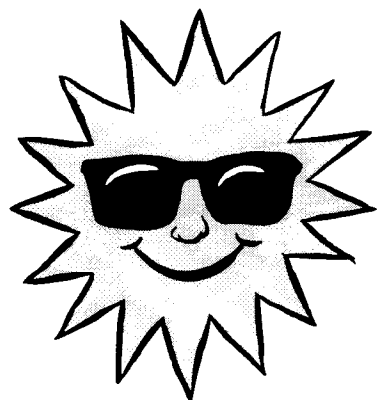


Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, July 5, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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'Running no more,' sisters find a home

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, July 04, 2006

By Ron Fonger

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FLINT - Two Flint sisters who ran away from foster care are off the streets, placed with a family they know in a home where they want to stay.

Natasha Sawyers, 16, whose poignant letter to The Flint Journal about life as a runaway was published June 25, and her sister, Ashley, 14, were placed with a friend's family after a quickly arranged hearing Friday in Genesee Circuit Court's family division.

"I (haven't) been to school for almost two years so I'm excited" about going back, said Natasha Sawyers, who wants to find a summer job, earn her diploma, "go to college and be a (registered nurse).

"I hope everything works out," she said. "We're not running no more."

The girls came out of hiding the same day Family Court Judge Duncan M. Beagle penned an unusual open letter to them, promising them placement in a good home, a chance to return to school, and no punishment for having run away.

Beagle's letter appeared in Sunday's Journal, but before that, caseworkers for the state Department of Human Services already were clearing the way for their return, working with Jatasha L. Haralson, who has taken them into her home on Flint's west side.

"The bottom line is we are glad they are safe and healthy," Beagle said.

The girls seemed right at home on Monday, giggling, getting their new room in order and planning a party to celebrate a fresh start after having been on the run together since late January.

They are guarded about what this year has been like and Ashley is quiet, letting her older sister speak for the pair.

Haralson, who has known the girls since they were in elementary school, said she was allowed to bring the sisters home on Friday after first approaching DHS about it two months ago.

At first rejected because she wasn't related and wasn't a foster parent, Haralson said DHS called again just last week - after Natasha's letter was published - and told her she could take in the girls under "fictive kin" rules.

The rules allow for a nonfamily member to care for a child even though they are unrelated when they have an emotionally significant bond.

"These girls are wonderful," she said, and both have been friends of her own daughter since childhood. "I'm sure it's going to be a challenge but it's going to be worth it."

Haralson works as a project specialist for the Genesee Intermediate School District and has three children of her own. She is applying to become the legal guardian of a cousin to the Sawyers and her 11-month-old baby as well.

The Sawyers were taken from their mother, Lori L. Manuel, after the state petitioned family court in late 2004 because of what it called Manuel's "chronic incidents of neglect."

Their father deceased, the girls stayed with family members with the blessing of DHS initially, but Natasha ran when she found out she was about to be placed with a foster family she didn't know in the Lansing area.

Months after she ran away, Natasha came back for Ashley when she suspected she was being mistreated - an allegation DHS has said it is investigating.

The sisters said they survived by moving and staying with people they knew who agreed to give them a hand.

"We weren't out in the streets. We weren't no bums," said Natasha, who said she still knows how to contact her mother and expects to have a relationship with her when she becomes an adult.

The girls said little about where they have been, but don't recommend running to others.

"It's over with for now so I ain't thinking about it," Natasha said.

Remus Holbrook, director of juvenile casework services for Genesee County Circuit Court, said he hopes the placement works for the girls.

"We're trying to set up a situation to put them in - a secure, safe placement," Holbrook said. "We don't want them out there on the street. That's not good for them or for the community."

Karen Stock, director of communications for DHS, would not comment on specifics of the case but said the state wants to find stable placements for all children who have run away from foster care.

The state's Web site listed more than 150 children as missing from the foster care system Monday.

The Sawyers' decision to report to court drops the list of children missing from foster care in the county to 13 after having been at 19 just last month.

Officials have said tips about the whereabouts of those runaways have been on the rise since a series of stories, including Natasha's letter, have appeared in The Journal.

Natasha said runaways are afraid to stop running because they don't know where they might be placed. She felt no one in the system listened to her in the past but said she's already decided she made the right decision.

"I would tell them to turn themselves in," she said to the remaining runaways. "That's the best thing to do."

QUICK TAKE

Still missing

Natasha and Ashley Sawyers are no longer missing from foster care, but 13 others from Genesee County are, according to the most recent listing by the countys Juvenile Casework Services program. The state Department of Human Services asks those with information about the children to call its toll free tip line at 1-866-729-0026. Shawanica

Bradley, 14
Julie Butler, 17
Dan Ray
Chandanais, 15
Ashley Cowan,
17
Carrie Davis, 16
Arielle Ewing, 17
Paige Fox, 14
Henry Marshall,
17
Joseph Owens, 17
Cheyanne Perez,
13
Kristina Pringle,
17
Monique Tellis,
17
Ashley West, 16

SOS looking for help to build facility

Planned new facility will serve 9,000 clients annually

By Austen Smith, Editor

Ypsilanti Courier

PUBLISHED: June 29, 2006

The SOS Community Services Center in Ypsilanti has been helping area families deal with the tragedy of homelessness for over 30 years.

Throughout that time they have worked diligently to secure funding through private and public contributions to operate the wide variety of services including housing, food pantry, counseling services, job skills training and research. The bulk of the Center's funding comes from the Federal Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

But now, more than ever, they need help from their surrounding community.

SOS officials plan on building a new facility, that will encompass all of the SOS services that are readily available to families in need, on a six-acre parcel to be located on Michigan Ave. and Ellsworth road in Ypsilanti.

SOS Director Gary Bell said they hope to have the new facility up and running in less than five years. Their operations right now are spread out between four different buildings located in Ypsilanti and Scio Township. With this new facility, families in crisis will have a "one-stop shop" for all of their needs.

"It makes it hard for our families because they have to go to one place to get food, and then they have to go to another place for other things," Belle said. "It's a challenge. Plus, we're pretty cramped for space here."

The new facility will be anchored by two, main buildings; the Family Center and the Children's Center. There will be a great number of amenities for families including a children's play area, day care and a teen hang-out area. All of the SOS services will be available on site.

"We really depend on the community and volunteers and we need them now more than ever," said Nancy Shore, who is the Community Relations Coordinator for SOS.

Shore admits the new facility is an ambitious plan. SOS officials hope to raise \$4-5 million over the next five years.

Bell said in building the new facility, they will help clients deal with the incredible stress with being homeless. He wants clients to feel like they're not in "...just another institution."

"We get a lot of people in here who have had bad experiences with systems," Bell said.

"We want our organization to not feel like a typical institution. A lot of these kids have seen horrible things, that kind of thing can be very traumatic for small children and we try as best we can to help that."

Fighting homelessness

The main focus of SOS is helping families cope with homelessness. The program started out on a different note, however, when it began in 1970 by Eastern Michigan students wanting to help fellow students overcome substance abuse.

Nancy Shore said they do whatever they can to help families get back on their feet which includes housing at SOS's shelter on Prospect Street.

"First off we try to get them immediate shelter," Shore said.

"We provide a lot of referrals, a place to stay, we make sure the family has food; child care is another necessity. We do job skills training. We try to teach people how to be self sufficient so they can stop being homeless."

She added, "We also do a lot of referrals to government services, we let people know how and where they can receive government aid. We teach them how to work through the system."

The SOS Crisis Center, an octagonal house located on River Street, is the central intake site for families needing SOS services. The center has a food pantry – open on Tuesday mornings and Wednesday afternoons – a common room where clients receive counseling and information for different programs surrounding the area.

SOS officials see over 900 homeless families walk through the crisis center doors every year. Shore said they come from all walks of life.

"The typical amount of time that we are involved in clients' lives is around two years," Shore said. "We have a very good success rate and I have seen people go from here and go on to receive degrees from EMU and get new jobs."

"We see some real positive things here."

The crisis center is mostly staffed by volunteers who are required to complete a rigorous 40-hour training session before counseling clients. Shore said if somebody just wants to work in the food pantry, they don't have to take the training.

The SOS Shelter features four apartment units where homeless families have the chance to maintain some semblance in their daily lives. Shore said that's the difference between living in separate apartments rather than community housing.

In order to donate to SOS – whether it be monetary, food, clothing or furniture – please call 1-734-485-8730. SOS can also be visited on the Web at www.soscs.org.

Homeless Alcoholics Receive a Permanent Place to Live, and Drink

By JESSICA KOWAL
The New York Times

Published: July 5, 2006

SEATTLE, June 30 — Rodney Littlebear was a homeless drunk who for 15 years ran up the public tab with trips to jail, homeless shelters and emergency rooms.

Howard Hunt, 41, homeless since 1999, moved into 1811 Eastlake in Seattle on the day it opened, in 2005.

The government-financed building's residents, who have been labeled "chronic public inebriates," are allowed to drink in their rooms.

He now has a brand-new, government-financed apartment where he can drink as much as he wants. It is part of a first-in-the-nation experiment to ease the torment of drug and alcohol addiction while saving taxpayers' money.

Last year, King County created a list of 200 "chronic public inebriates" in the Seattle region who had cost the most to round up and care for. Seventy-five were offered permanent homes in a new apartment building known by its address, 1811 Eastlake.

Each had been a street drunk for several years and had failed at least six efforts at sobriety. In a controversial acknowledgment of their addiction, the residents — 70 men and 5 women — can drink in their rooms. They do not have to promise to drink less, attend Alcoholics Anonymous or go to church.

"They woke me up in detox and told me they were going to move me in," said Mr. Littlebear, 37, who has had a series of strokes and uses a walker. "When I got here, I said, 'Oh boy, this don't look like no treatment center.' "

These are the "unsympathetic homeless" who beg, drink, urinate and vomit in public — and they are probably the most difficult to get off the streets, said Bill Hobson, executive

director of the Downtown Emergency Service Center, the nonprofit group that owns 1811 Eastlake.

In 2003, the public spent \$50,000, on average, for each of 40 homeless alcoholics found most often at the jail, the sobering center and the public Harborview Medical Center, said Amnon Shoenfeld, director of King County's division of mental health and chemical abuse.

Mr. Hobson's group expected the annual cost for each new resident of 1811 Eastlake to be \$13,000, or a total of \$950,000. It cost \$11.2 million to build and is paid for entirely by the City of Seattle and county, state and federal governments.

The actual price tag will probably rise because residents have more serious health problems than expected, said Margaret King, a social worker who manages the building. Many have heart ailments, cirrhosis, diabetes, head injuries from falling on sidewalks and severe circulation problems. Four residents have already died, including one who moved in with late-stage liver cancer.

The building's critics are particularly incensed that residents do not have to stay sober. The Seattle Times, in 2004, editorialized that government should insist that the residents quit drinking in order to live there.

"Bunks for drunks — it's a living monument to failed social policy," said John Carlson, a conservative radio talk show host here. This approach, he said, is "aiding and abetting someone's self-destruction."

Drink they do. When residents are shuttled to supermarkets for groceries, Ms. King said, they often buy wine or beer, which is sold in this state alongside the milk, eggs and orange juice.

Like Mr. Littlebear, Howard Hunt, 41, moved in the first day. Homeless since 1999, Mr. Hunt said he drank a daily bottle of whiskey before he came to 1811 Eastlake. He has epilepsy and walks with crutches because he fractured his hip.

He shrugged when asked about the policy allowing him to drink in his new home. "We're going to drink somewhere," Mr. Hunt said.

Influential Bush administration officials have come to support this project, including the on-site drinking. John Meyers, director of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's regional office here, said he blanched when he learned that his agency had pledged \$2 million for it. He now calls 1811 Eastlake "a glorious experiment."

"It's a lot cheaper having them spend the night at 1811 than at the E.R. or at the drunk tank," Mr. Meyers said.

Philip F. Mangano, executive director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, said there should be a similar building in every city in the country.

These apartments fit into the "housing first" philosophy, newly adopted by many cities, intended to give permanent housing and intensive services to long-term homeless people. Local officials have already approved other buildings for the mentally ill and people with chronic medical conditions, said Adrienne Quinn, director of Seattle's Housing Office.

Though it would be unthinkable for a market-rate apartment building in this booming city, 1811 Eastlake's front door is across the street from busy Interstate 5, on the edge of downtown. The Starbucks around the corner donates pastries, but Robb Anderson, 43, an owner of the trophy shop next door to the apartments, complained bitterly about paramedics' 120 visits in just six months.

The building's atmosphere during a recent daytime visit was more convalescent home than rowdy dorm. A few men in the television room stared silently at a World Cup match, while others wearing backpacks trudged through the front door and into the communal kitchen for apple fritters and coffee.

A third of the residents, including Mr. Littlebear, are American Indian; an estimated 20 percent are military veterans. The average age is 45. Most receive state or federal disability payments, and all residents pay 30 percent of their income as rent under HUD's guideline for low-income housing.

By choice or if they need frequent medical attention, 26 residents live on the first floor in office-sized cubicles with a bed, desk, dresser and small refrigerator. These communal living areas have a strong scent of body odor.

Upstairs, 49 people have private studio apartments with a single bed, bath and kitchen. For many, this normal existence is a huge adjustment. One man continues to sleep on the floor next to his bed, and another refused sheets in favor of his sleeping bag, Ms. King said.

Their quality of life, drinking and use of public services are being studied by researchers at the University of Washington. Ms. King said the alcohol intake of the residents was shockingly high at first, but many residents say they now drink less, at least by their standards.

"I cut down," Mr. Littlebear said. "I've got to save my liver."

Tuesday, July 04, 2006

The Detroit News

Our Opinion

State still sloppy with school records

The state of Michigan still has major problems with record-keeping. After weeks of scrutinizing the list of school employees with criminal convictions, the State Police finally released a list last week it boasted was accurate. It wasn't. At least three names on the list didn't belong there. The individuals were caused untold embarrassment and humiliation. Such sloppy work is inexcusable.

Sturgis man faces charges in child-porn case

Wednesday, July 05, 2006

Kalamazoo Gazette Staff Reports

A Sturgis man has been charged with 20 counts of possessing child pornography following a monthlong investigation, authorities said.

Tony Lee Hartman, 34, is being held in the St. Joseph County Jail on a \$100,000 bond. He is scheduled to be arraigned Friday.

Sturgis police worked with the Michigan State Police Computer Crimes Unit in Lansing after receiving a tip that Hartman possibly had child pornography.

He was arrested last Friday. On Monday, St. Joseph County Assistant Prosecutor Holly Curtis authorized a 20-count felony warrant against Hartman.

Ten of the counts involve using a computer to commit a crime. Each count calls for a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and/or a \$20,000 fine if the suspect is convicted.

A child is waiting

Happy sisters would do well with a 1- or 2-parent family

Rosemary Dorr / Special to The Detroit News

Seven-year-old Codey volunteers to spell her name, then her big sister's name. Danielle, who turned 10 a few days ago, smiles at Codey's enthusiasm.

The two, with perky braids and beautiful eyes, are friendly and playful.

Danielle, who's going to fifth grade, reports, "I got As, Bs and Cs. I like spelling best. I like reading, too. Funny stories and comics. And I like to draw."

"I'll be in second grade," Codey says. "I like math best."

The girls' foster mother of a year notes, "Danielle will do whatever you ask her to do. Codey is sweet, real kind-hearted. She's a handful, though. Very active."

Climbing trees is a favorite pastime for both. "I climb a lot," says Danielle, adding, "I like to play video games, go to the park and climb the monkey bars, too."

Says Codey, "I like to build sand castles in the park. I want to be like my sister when I grow up."

The girls' adoption worker is hoping to find them a home that won't dissolve with a family that is nurturing and committed. "They would benefit," she says, with a single or two-parent family.

Please consider adoption and talk with Kim Williams at Wayne County Department of Human Services, (313) 396-0239.

Last column's child: Sharrie, 14, and her brother Marco, 11, are engaging children who respond to positive attention. For information, call Dana Abbamonte at Methodist Children's Home Society, (313) 531-4158.

A Child is Waiting appears Tuesdays in Features.

Police: Elderly Woman Brutally Attacked

Husband, Wife Duo In Custody

POSTED: 4:10 pm EDT July 3, 2006

An elderly woman was brutally attacked while leaving the Meijer store in Roseville last week, police said.

The woman was leaving the store with a bag of groceries when a husband and wife duo violently attacked her, stole her purse containing \$120 and left her bruised from head to toe, according to police.

"I'm not a football player, but he took me down like a football player," said the woman, who does not want to be identified.

"I felt this thump on my back, and then I felt this tugging on my purse, and I said 'Oh my God, help me,' and I went down," the woman said.

Tips led police to Vincent and Carli Dipaola, who were tracked down and arrested.

The woman said she doesn't only want to see justice, but more awareness, saying that her mistake was not paying enough attention.

Vincent and Carli Dipaola have been charged with robbery and assault. They could each face up to 15 years in prison.

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2-1-1 help line connects callers, services in U.P.

68 ASSOCIATED PRESS 7/6/06

ESCANABA — People across the Upper Peninsula can get help with jobs, housing, clothes, transportation and other needs with one three-digit telephone number.

The U.P. 2-1-1 call center is funded through the Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress. It links people with human service information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"If you've had a house fire in Houghton and you need virtually everything replaced, you could call this number, and we would put you in touch with the services in your area," Executive Director Jonathan Mead told The Daily Mining Gazette of Houghton for a story this week.

The call center maintains a database of about 560 federal, state and local agencies and nonprofit groups. Together, they offer about 6,000 services.

An Upper Peninsula resident who calls 211 is connected to an information and referral specialist who can talk about the caller's needs and offer information to address them.

"When you're in a situation where you need help, you shouldn't have to guess or look

"When you're in a situation where you need help, you shouldn't have to guess or look through the phone book to find an agency that will meet your needs."

Jonathan Mead

U.P. 2-1-1 call center executive director

through the phone book to find an agency that will meet your needs," Mead said.

The main call center is in Escanaba, with an after-hours office in Houghton. It began accepting calls May 1, and the commission says it expects to handle a peak of 25,000 calls a year. It now has three full-time call specialists and is expected to have six in all.

The service also connects volunteers and the agencies who need them, Mead said.

"In many cases, organizations are looking for volunteers but don't have the time, money or resources to get the word out," Mead said.

Someone with free time might be put in touch with an agency that needs help delivering meals to the elderly.

"Those agencies are all in the database, and we're able to link that individual up," he said.

Online

► Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress:
www.upcap-services.com

"That's what we're talking about: those seemingly quiet acts that have a huge impact — that open other lives ..."

Megan Raphael
co-author, "The Courage Code"

Book highlights everyday 'feminine side of courage'

Authors' profiles include 20 women in northern Mich.

BY MARTA HELPER DRAHOS
Associated Press

TRaverse CITY — Laura Oblinger lives a "perfect" life, with a high-profile career, a new baby and a husband.

But six years ago, she had difficulty even leaving her house.

Trapped in a verbally abusive relationship, Oblinger was discouraged from visiting her family, from being around others, even from being her own person — until one day when she packed what she needed to leave and not come back. She drove away with one eye on the rearview mirror as her husband shouted after her.

"When I think back to that moment in my life, it was literally driving away from that home because it was the place that inhibited me from so much," said Oblinger, senior vice president of the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce.

"So driving away from it was knowing I was driving away from it forever. And it was freeing."

Leading with the heart

Oblinger is one of 20 northern Michigan women featured in a new book called "The Courage Code." Written by local businesswomen Jennifer Byron and Megan Raphael, it acknowledges and celebrates women's everyday acts of courage, from standing up and speaking out for what they believe to reaching out and building up through cooperation, compassion and mutual respect.

"The current definition of courage is about very out-there, bold heroics," said Byron, a licensed Brain Gym instructor with a background in market-



JAN-MICHAEL STUMP/Associated Press

Survivor: Laura Oblinger of Traverse City, with her husband, Chris, and daughter Gracie, 4 months, is featured in "The Courage Code." Six years ago, she was trapped in an abusive relationship.

About the book

- ▶ "The Courage Code," by Jennifer Byron and Megan Raphael; Utopia Press, \$15.95; ISBN: 0966106059
- ▶ The book profiles 44 women, including 20 from northern Michigan.

ing, education and administration. "We think of courage as being about skydiving or running into a burning building. And those are very courageous acts. But there is an additional, feminine side of courage."

The book profiles 44 women from all over the country, including Traverse Magazine owner Deb Wyatt Fellows, Rabbi Chava Bahle of Congregation Ahavat Shalom, Rotary Charities Executive Director Marsha Smith and philanthropist Sondra Shaw-Hardy. Though the women represent different ages and backgrounds, all have one thing in common, Raphael said.

"They all spoke to that resiliency, leading with their heart," she said.

"They knew it was important

to act on something they believed in, whether it was tackling a new job, a career, leaving an abusive relationship or kicking a drug habit."

Defying social mores

Among the more compelling stories is that of Cadillac dentist Bethany Piziks, who not only overcame the abuse she suffered at the hands of her father but was able to see how she was using it to hold back, Byron said. Recognizing her power to determine her own life, Piziks moved forward to better both her life and her practice.

For the late Traverse City arts advocate Betty Parsons, courage was defying social mores.

"At the time her son died of AIDS-related cancer, putting his obituary in the paper was a very courageous act in Traverse City," said Raphael, a life coach.

"And that's what we're talking about: those seemingly quiet acts that have a huge impact — that open other lives, inspire them, make the world better."

Lansing State Journal Letters

July 5, 2006

Fix welfare

Last December, Jennifer Granholm had the opportunity to change our welfare system in Michigan. Her failure to do so will result in a hefty fine from the federal government.

Luckily, this issue is coming back up for a vote again. When the bill arrives on her desk, I urge Gov. Granholm to vote for the reform. Michigan cannot afford a heavy fine and we cannot continue to allow people to drain our tax money.

If she fails to do this, the Michigan voters should show their support for reform by voting for Dick DeVos in November.

Kimberly Hancock
Williamston